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Magic (TOTWOTW)

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Magic, also known as **the Force**, **the Power**, or **Chaos**, is the metaphysical phenomenon that permeates not only the world, but quite likely the rest of the universe — and, quite possibly, the entirety of the Spiral and beyond.

It is regarded as the result of the interaction between energetic universes — namely, the so-called elemental and para-elemental planes — and reality itself, through what are known as ley lines: semi-physical channels (theorized to have been purely energetic prior to the First Conjunction) through which the power of the elemental planes seeps into the material world.

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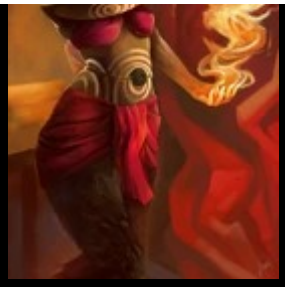
Range of Magic

Magic is employed throughout the world by a wide range of beings for a multitude of purposes. From the enhanced

abilities of anomalies, to simple combat spells like the Signs used by witchers, to the so-called Miracles invoked by priests, the Convocations emotionally channeled by witches and warlocks, and finally to the most complex incantations performed by druids, mages, and equivalent practitioners across the world.



Salma, a succubus using Fire Magic

However, due to its very nature, magic cannot be wielded by all. While a few simple spells — such as the aforementioned witcher's Signs — can theoretically be used by anyone with proper training and focus, only those born with the gift, known as Sources — individuals with a natural affinity for magical abilities — are truly capable of channeling and mastering its immense power.

Origin of Magic

"*"Remember," she repeated, "magic is Chaos, Art and Science. It is a curse, a blessing and progress. It all depends on who uses magic, how they use it, and to what purpose. And magic is everywhere. All around us. Easily accessible. It is enough to stretch out one's hand. See? I'm stretching out my hand."*
—Yennefer of Vengerberg to Ciri during her training (The Black Book of Ellander, Chapter 3)

Magic is believed to have existed in the world since the creation of its universe. In the beginning, it manifested only as energetic channels surrounding the cosmos, without significantly affecting it — allowing for the faintest presence of magic, barely perceptible. This is one of the reasons why, combined with the fact that humans came from a universe with little to no magic, many believed for a long time that magic only emerged after the First Conjunction, when those channels became semi-physical.

It is theorized that, due to this initial energetic nature, certain beings such as dragons, and perhaps cats (though there is ongoing debate about whether cats are native to the world or arrived with other beings during the First Conjunction) were able to absorb and interact with magic in a passive, almost photosynthetic way — mimicking how plants absorb sunlight.

The purpose behind this magical absorption remains unknown in the case of cats. As for dragons, it is theorized that this ability aided them during their early

evolutionary stages — possibly enabling them to fly — until it was no longer necessary for that purpose.

What Is Magic?

For a long time, there has been an ongoing debate about the true nature of magic.

Some refer to it as an art, others as chaos, and still others as a science of study.

None of these definitions are entirely accurate on their own. The most objective explanation would be that magic is the resulting product of interactions between energetic universes and physical reality. It is considered an ***art*** because it requires talent and dedication; ***chaos***, due to its volatile and unpredictable nature; and a ***science***, because — like any other — it helps us understand the world, solve problems, and ignite the light of progress.

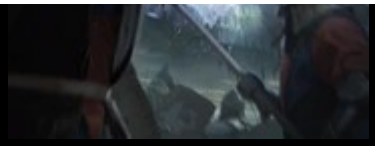
In fact, one could say that magic is the twin sister of philosophy. While philosophy encourages us to think and gives rise to its daughters — such as biology, geology, logic, and more — magic enables us to create, allowing those very fields to advance through practical application.

How Is Magic Accessed?

There are four Primary Elements, along with a large number of Para-Elements — some of which remain unknown — all originating from the Elemental Planes and Para-Elemental Planes respectively. These elements manifest in the world through ley lines, their intersections, and Places of Power built atop them. These sites are considered the primary sources of magical energy.

There are rare exceptions to this rule, the only confirmed ones being the Ethereal Plane, Star Plane and the Para-Elemental Plane of Ice.

In situations where no ley lines or Places of Power are nearby, objects charged with elemental or para-elemental energy — such as witcher medallions — can serve as temporary substitutes, until their energy is depleted. Vital energy can also be used to fuel spells, but as the name implies, doing so may endanger — or even kill — the caster. Thus, magic



A mage using a teleportation spell during a battle

that uses vital energy is usually employed by extracting it from the surroundings.

While most spells work best when cast using their aligned element, it is still possible — though significantly more difficult — to cast them using a different one.

The most complex legal spells are based on Ether (also known as Spirit). Mages who wish to cast such spells must either draw energy from the Ethereal Plane, or combine the Primary Elements in precise ways.

Other, more complicated and forbidden spells, draw their power from the Chasm — also known as the Netherworld — an unknown and shadowy plane inhabited by demons and restless spirits. Spellcasters who rely on Chasm magic often look for the presence of mysterious tree-like entities known as Nemeta. These beings are said to manifest wherever a concentration of energy forms between the Material Plane and the Abyssal Plane, serving as visual confirmation of a site where Chasm magic can be extracted — most often for dark or nefarious purposes.

Differences Between Spells, Convocations, and Miracles

"*Of course, some people claim to be born with the ability to 'cast anything' without training. Most of them are either dead or a burden for their families nowadays.*"
—Axel Miguel Esparza, mage part of the team of eighteen masters of magic who worked under Grandmaster Ortolan at Rissberg

To the untrained eye, a spell, a convocation, and a miracle might appear indistinguishable — after all, fire bursts, healing auras, and trapping spectral apparitions can all look quite similar. However, while they all stem from the same common denominator — magic — they diverge rather quickly in practice, origin, and intent.

Spell

A spell is a deliberate manifestation of one or more elemental energies extracted and shaped in a specific form.

Spells may range from simple to highly complex, and typically require:

- **Precise diction**
- **Gestural clarity and movement control**
- **Sustained concentration**

Examples include the well-known Signs used by witchers — simple combat spells often gestured with one or both hands due to their ease of casting — and, at the other end of the spectrum, complex rituals designed to various purposes.

Convocation

A convocation is an emotional manifestation rather than an intentional one. Like spells, it involves the extraction of elemental energies, but instead of focusing through intellect and discipline, it channels raw emotion.

This is the primary method used by witches and warlocks, whose “spells” are more accurately called convocations. In that sense, this type of magic is also what monsters such as fiends and chorts are using when they activate their third eye.

The process usually involves a combination of:

- **Emotionally charged intent**
- **Instinctive gesturing**
- **Unconscious verbalization (i.e., not a structured incantation)**

Contrary to popular belief — especially in certain corners of the multiverse — this is not “wild magic”. In truth, wild magic doesn't exist, nor do special bloodlines that miraculously bypass training. No one truly wields magic without guidance and walks away sane. Uncontrolled convocation (like the ones Sources are able to make) without foundational discipline often leads to severe mental degradation, including various mental ilnesses such as dementia and catatonia.

Miracle

A miracle is a non-intentional manifestation of elemental energy or elemental energies shaped in a specific form, typically occurring during a trance state — most often brought on by prayer.

Unlike spells or convocations, miracles are usually:

- **Unconscious in execution**

- **Lacking structured intent**
- **Usually performed by individuals unaware they are channeling magic**

Most priests do not even know they are using magic. As a result, when miracles occur, they interpret them as divine acts — not personal manifestations of them using magic. Their method does share common elements with spellcasting: concentration, verbalization (if the prayer is spoken aloud), and occasionally gestures, though less refined.

As for clerics, it is believed that their form of magic operates through a hybrid model — one that combines ritualistic prayer with intense emotional states, typically fanatic devotion. Their magic, though liturgical in structure, carries traces of both convocation and spellcasting, usually without conscious control.

Type	Intentionality	Key Mechanism	Practitioner Archetypes	Risk Factor
Spell	Fully intentional	Discipline + Will	Mages, Witchers, Druids	Low (if trained, though it also depends on the type of magic used)
Convocation	Emotionally driven	Emotion + Instinct	Untrained Sources, Witches, Warlocks	Medium to High
Miracle	Unintentional	Trance + Devotion	Priests, Clerics (unknowingly)	Low (but unstable)

Difference Between Blessing and Curse

"*Telawel forges and repairs all kinds of tools in his divine forge — he doesn't fix*

broken legs, bless the land, or cure depression through his blessings. Same applies to his curses. If it were true that gods could bless or curse anything regardless of their domain, we'd be living in the stupidest world imaginable. That's why I know, with certainty, that neither blessings nor curses are divine. Guided, perhaps? Who knows. I'm not the one to deny that possibility."
—Racirz of Hengfors, itinerant priest and preacher of the blacksmith god Telawel, as well as a practicing informal medic.

Despite popular belief, neither blessings nor curses have a divine origin. Both stem from ether-magic, as ether plays a key role in many aspects of existence — particularly in the case of living beings, where it acts as the building block of souls.

Their differences are simple and as follows:

A blessing is essentially the casting of a spell (usually unconsciously, after extracting ether, often by individuals capable of some kind of magic — such as the aforementioned priests, for instance), which causes a long-term positive effect on a person or object.

A curse, on the other hand, is a malevolent magical spell casted in a similar way to a blessing on someone or something, typically bringing about misfortune. Said misfortune may range from physical transformation, to chronic bad luck, or — in extreme cases — death.

The only true similarity between both is their long-lasting duration.

A key distinction of curses is that, when they are transferable, they can sometimes stop being "curses" altogether and instead become diseases or abilities. A well-known example of this is therianthropy, as second-generation therianthropes and beyond are often capable of switching between their human, hybrid, and animal forms at will.

The Black Sun, one of the most known "curses"

Difference Between Ritual, Manifestation and Calling

Despite being often mistakenly interchanged, a ritual, manifestation and Calling are not the same.

Ap

A ritual is a highly complex spell, as previously explained. Thus, although it may involve more components (such as objects, symbols, etc.), it

requires diction, clarity of gesture, precise movement, and sustained focus.

A Manifestation, though similar in appearance due to sharing the involvement of more components,it is, in truth, a complex form of Convocation. It is typically employed by witches and warlocks in their so-called personal rituals, or when they gather in gatherings, covens, or sabbaths, where the combined force of emotionally charged intent is used to empower the Manifestation.

Moreover, Manifestations can be performed even by those with no innate magical aptitude. In fact, the term itself derives from the misnamed "rituals" historically performed by demonologists to summon—just as their "profession" suggests—demons.

A Calling is, in turn, the equivalent of a ritual or Manifestation, but performed by individuals such as priests, clerics, pellars and so on. Its complexity lies in the fact that it requires a set of specific things to be carried out (like the others previously mentioned), but with the difference, that in most cases, it also demands the presence of one or more additional people who, through chants, induce a trance state in the one performing the Calling, allowing them to channel the necessary elemental or para-elemental energy or energies and bring about the intended result.

One well-known example of a Calling in the Northern Realms is the Forefather's Eve, held in Velen.

Difference Between a Blessing an Invocation

Although to the untrained eye — especially outside priesthood circles — a invocation, and a blessing may appear to be the same, this is not the case.

A blessing, while seemingly similar to certain types of invocations (such as bless weapon), is performed unconsciously and usually has a long-term positive effect — something invocations lack, as their effects are often limited in duration.

An invocation, on the other hand, acts as something of a middle ground between a standard spell and a convocation. One could say it is neither as simple as a Witcher's Sign, nor as elaborate as a mage spell, nor as forceful as a convocation. It involves sustained concentration, emotionally charged intent, conscious gesturing, and precise diction — yet the user is unaware they are channeling

magic, believing instead that the effect comes from a divine source.

Another key aspect of invocations—at least within the context of priesthood—is that the element or para-element and the type of magic involved will depend primarily on a combination of emotion and the deity worshipped. It is important to clarify that this does not mean that the practitioner is connecting with their deity—not even close, in fact. What they connect with, subconsciously, is the archetype or archetypes represented by that deity.

These archetypes then influence the kind of elemental or para-elemental energy that is drawn, and thus, how the invocation will function.

For example: Morrigan is a deity of war, ghosts, and ravens. Her archetypes are the warrior and the spirit. This will lead a priest who follows Morrigan, when performing an invocation, to subconsciously channel ethereal energy (as ghosts are made of ether), and to manifest magic with a predominantly offensive nature, due to war being an inherently aggressive force.

Ley Lines

Main article: Ley Lines

"*Those not attuned to Chaos are quick to label magic as 'the other' — a force existing completely separate from the natural world and, by its alien nature, not to be trusted. But the matter is not quite so black and white. Magic permeates the land we walk on, and the pathways it follows form a complex web of beauty that could only be brought about by magic.*"
—Glynnis var Treharne, Nilfgaardian Sorceress

Contrary to what some priests believe, magic does not originate from a whimsical goddess. Nor is it the malevolent force certain faiths — such as that of the Eternal Fire — claim it to be. As previously stated, it is a natural force, one that existed in our universe long before any sentient species was born. However, it originally manifested in an energetic form, and only became semi-physical after the First Conjunction, when the energies of foreign universes permeated our reality more deeply, warping it and solidifying into the semi-physical fissures known as ley lines — tears in the fabric of space where reality bends, and the veil between the material world and this alien planes grows thinner.

Ley lines can reach up to six meters wide and crisscross the entire planet, appearing at any altitude — from the peaks of mountains to caverns deep

beneath the sea. Together, they form a vast, interconnected web that serves as the invisible skeleton of magic throughout the world.

Each ley line is linked to a specific element or para-element and manifests different environmental features. For example:

- A Earth Ley Line may be identified by twisted trees, dense vegetation, or unnatural rock formations.
- A Water Ley Line might bring excessive humidity, irregular water currents, or extreme tides in coastal regions.
- A Fire Ley Line may cause searing sunlight, scorched plants, or shimmering heat distortions.
- Air Ley Lines can be spotted through cirrus clouds, dust devils, and the distinct smell of ozone.
- A Electricity Ley Line manifests as recurring thunderstorms, heavy static charge, and phenomena such as skyquakes.
- A Chasm Ley Line is marked by an eerie sense of dread, dead zones where nothing grows, and the presence of Nemeta — the tree-like beings previously mentioned.

In addition, each ley line emits a magical signature that can be sensed by any creature capable of perceiving magical aura. Mages often report a cramp in the ring finger when within ten meters of a ley line. Experienced magic users can detect not only the presence of a ley, but also its elemental or para-elemental type and directional flow.

Intersections

"*If I hear another ignorant priest or priestess claiming that magic comes from a 'weave' controlled by a goddess and that there are 'chosen ones' by said goddess, I swear I'll request Master Ortolan's permission to begin human experimentation.*"
—Fragment recovered from the last personal journal of Axel Miguel Esparza, found after his death at the Battle of Sodden (1263), currently on display at the Temerian Museum of History

Locations where two or more ley lines converge are known as Intersections. Atop the most powerful of these, ancient elves and other civilizations constructed Places of Power or Circles of Elements to safely tap into their immense magical potential.

When ley lines of different elements intersect, they can generate a specific type of para-elemental energy. Drawing from these intersections allows for safer extraction than directly from a raw ley line of a Para-Elemental Plane. Mages typically begin by channeling the element they are most attuned to (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, etc.), and then gradually layer in secondary, tertiary, or even quaternary elements, depending on how many ley lines are crossing at the site until they finally obtain the wanted para-elemental energy.

Exceptions

As previously mentioned, some exceptions to ley-based manifestation exist:

Stellar Magic does not rely on ley lines at all. Instead, it draws power from celestial alignments and the energy emitted by astral bodies, which fluctuate with the movement of stars and planets across the firmament.

Ice Magic functions differently as well. Rather than flowing along ley lines, Ice accumulates in static points — much like snow — and can be tapped at specific locations. It is theorized that if Ice had true ley lines, the planet might have already succumbed to eternal glaciation under its perpetually spreading frost.

And lastly, Ether Magic, which manifests in the world through radii within rectangles, also known as receptor zones — that is, circular areas not found around ley line intersections, but rather in regions where two or more ley lines run in parallel, forming a rectangular structure encompassed by the radius of the Ether zone.

At such points, the energy emitted from the aligned lines weakens the material plane just enough to allow extraction from the Ether Plane, bringing it closer to the physical world — although drawing from it is notably more difficult than with traditional ley lines, due to the unique manner in which Ether manifests.

These radii can be identified by visual distortions, minor violations of physical laws, and a “dreamlike” sensation.

Branches of Magic

There are many established branches of magic, with most mages displaying a natural affinity for a particular element or discipline, which they typically study more extensively. However, it is not uncommon for a mage to develop proficiency in other areas, even those linked to different elements.

Some branches, however, are considered taboo — the most notorious being Goetia, Blood Magic, and Necromancy — and have been officially banned and persecuted by various magical organizations throughout history.

Specialists in so-called "*submagics*" also exist and are relatively common in comparison to the mages that have proficiency in various areas of different elements. For instance, a mage specialized in Water-based magic, may choose to specialize in Blood Magic, given the latter's high water composition. These overlaps often lead to hybrid specializations and interdisciplinary techniques.

A mage assassin using Electricity Magic

Naming Conventions

Magical disciplines are often categorized by their suffixes, which indicate the nature or purpose of the practice:

- "–kinesis" refers to the physical manipulation of a given element — such as pyrokinesis (setting objects on fire) or telekinesis (moving objects through will alone).
- "–makhesis" denotes combat-focused magic, often destructive in nature — such as conjuring storms or inducing multiple organ failure to lethally disable an enemy *(hematomakhesis)*.
- "–mancy" generally refers to interpretation or communication through magical means — for example, pyromancy (reading fate through fire-gazing), or necromancy (forcing the dead to speak).

On Divine, Arcane, or Faith-Based Magic

"*If faith could fuel spells, we'd all be dead from the prayers of the stupid*"
—Quote attributed to Axel Miguel Esparza during his tenure as professor at Ban Ard (1140–1160)

Despite what certain religions continue to preach, there is no verifiable evidence

of so-called divine, holy, or faith-based magic. These terms remain unproven constructs, lacking any foundation in measurable magical theory.

What appears far more likely is the existence of magical domains not yet understood by contemporary magical science. Phenomena often attributed to gods or miracles are, in most cases, better explained as unknowing uses of traditional magic — such as the spontaneous miracles performed by priests, previously discussed — or as instances of undiscovered magical domains channeled unconsciously by those individuals. These manifestations are typically misinterpreted due to ignorance, myth, or religious dogma.

Creational Magic

"*The only 'holy light' I've ever seen coming from a paladin was the blaze from his arse after triggering a poorly written glyph. Miraculous and hilarious in equal measure, yes — but divine? Hardly.*"
—Professor Axel Miguel Esparza, Ban Ard Academy, Lecture on Magical Fraud and Charlatanism (1153)
"*I've only ever met one kind of paladin in my life: religious fanatics playing hero with so-called divine powers. And truth is, they have neither divine powers nor any heroism — just men and women so corrupt they take pleasure in deceiving people and bleeding them dry with elaborate lies.*"
—Putnam Pitch, witcher of the Griffin School

Creational magic stands as the pinnacle of current magical science. As its name implies, it is the ability to create new materials, objects, and beings within the real world. This branch of magic originates from ether magic, flowing through multiple types of elemental and para-elemental magic along the way until the new material, object, or being is created — making it one of the most complex disciplines to master.

Only expert illusionists or gifted rune magic practitioners — such as the renowned Artorius Vigo, creator of the complex, almost-real illusion known as the Land of a Thousand Fables — have ever managed to perform it. And even then, his creational magic was limited to minor objects within the illusion itself, such as ribbons or armors, and not the realm that was the illusion as a whole.

It’s important to clarify that this magic bears no divine origin, no matter how much priests, clerics, or those laughable clerics turned pseudo-knights known as paladins — who merely use runic enchantments on their armor to deceive the masses — may claim otherwise. As previously explained, this is simply an extremely demanding form of magic, due to the extensive time, dedication, and precise steps it requires — much like any other creative process.

What Is a Submagic?

“*I once met a guy who claimed to be a better hunter than me — ‘filthy mutant’, he called me — just because he could wield blood magic. He went after a myriapodan without proper prep, relying solely on his fancy blood tricks. You know what happened? The myriapodan ate him in under a minute.*”
—Putnam Pitch, witcher of the Griffin School

A submagic is, as its name implies, a type of magic that derives from another — being both similar and different enough to not be considered either a magic of that element or para-element, nor a wholly separate type of magic. This is usually due to a large portion of its energy sharing a similar composition with its "parent" magic — approximately in a 60%-40%, 70%-30% or 80% -20% ratio.

Many submagics, due to their classification as "lesser" magics, can be used without much trouble by people without inherent magical abilities.

The best-known examples are the runewrights of Ofir and the artificers of the North and the Nilfgaardian Empire.

Some popular examples of submagic include blood magic or — as previously mentioned via the runewrights and artificers — rune magic, the latter of which has no specific “parent,” as it draws from various elemental or para-elemental magics depending on the type of rune or glyph used. Many runic mages (who channel the power of runes through the so-called runic discs — circular plates of copper alloy that harness the power of multiple runestones in order to fuse energies drawn from multiple

Artuald aggerusing for Blot Kalestiperforming Illusory Magic

o d M a g ic elemental and para-elemental planes, thus both enhancing and making more complex their spells) argue that runic magic actually originates from ethereal magic (this would explain the capability of runes for creational magic purposes), which is then redirected into elemental or para-elemental magic once the new rune or glyph is created and has acquired meaning within reality.

About "Patron" Magic

"*Anyone still insisting that patron magic is real — please, leave my class*"
—Axel Miguel Esparza, to first-year students at Ban Ard

Among the common folk, it is widely believed that so-called patron or pact magic exists — an idea rooted in countless fairy tales that have no grounding in reality. The very concept is flawed from the start: extracting magic from external sources inherently rules out the possibility of some "patron" granting power in exchange for supposed "earthly representation."

Why would I need to strike a bargain when I can extract exactly what I need from a ley line?

Why would a being from another plane require representation in the material world when — as seen with genies — they could raze it to the ground if they so wished?

And worse still, even those without magical talent can just study runic magic and bypass the need for any pact entirely.

What does exist, at most, is a form of exchange-based magic, as seen in the practice of Goetia, where something is offered in return for something else — most famously, one's soul.

Even the closest approximation to this so-called patron magic — namely, the use of beings from the elemental or para-elemental planes as power sources, especially the various kinds of genies (djinn, marides, d´aos, ifrits, and others) — remains a form of contractual magic where the mage holds the upper hand. The being, in exchange for granting three wishes, is released and allowed to return to its native plane.

And even if one were to invoke the phenomenon of possession associated with Goetic practices, this still cannot be categorized as patron magic with any

“earthly representation.” While some demons may struggle to materialize in the physical world, many others are perfectly capable of doing so — and those who can't will simply resort to possession. They don’t trust mortals to act on their behalf. They use them.

Regarding Vibrational Magic

“*I don’t get why mages are so obsessed with changing shape. In the end, with all that changing and changing, the earth’s gonna swallow them whole out of sheer arrogance — and the ones left will just grow dumber and more unbearable. Like those guys… what were they called again?*”
—Rhulrialran “Rhul” Vauglas, dwarven blacksmith, co-owner of Rhul and Buzz’s Smithing Emporium

Failed Vibrational Magic spell

Strictly speaking, vibrational magic does not exist — at least not the concept derived from exaggerated tales of reality-warping powers tied to long-lost, ultra-powerful races that, for some illogical reason, never managed to conquer their own world.

What does exist is reassignment magic, also known as vibrational, tonal, or transmutation magic (not to be confused with mutagenic alchemy either), due to the way it operates. This is another kind of magic which, like the most powerful ones, derives from the ether, and allows for the spatial readjustment of a body or object by altering its vibration in the world — without changing its basic essence — in order to make it into something else.

Because of the element required to make it work, as well as the magical skill needed to perform it, this ability demands years of serious magical study to be mastered by any mage.

This is what gives rise to the phenomenon of polymorphism in mages, chromatic dragons, and certain vampires such as alps and bruxae — and quite possibly many other beings. After all, if reality were truly being altered, these polymorphs would lose their consciousness during transformation — which they clearly do not.

An example that explains the difference between this type of magic and other types of transmutations could be the next:

Mutagenic alchemy, completely alters a being’s body, but it does not change its

spatial vibration.

Vibrational magic, on the other hand, works as follows: if a mage wishes to become a duck, the mage's own vibrational frequency is replaced with that of a duck through the use of ether to enable it, allowing reality to interpret them as a duck — but without the loss of consciousness, since only their spatial vibration is being replaced, not their core essence.

Dopplers, on the other hand, are believed not to use this form of magic at all. Instead, their cells behave like highly advanced stem cells, allowing them to assume the shape and personality of any creature that shares their same mass. A similar phenomenon occurs with second-generation therianthropes and beyond, though limited to their three forms: human, hybrid, and animal.

It is important not to confuse this with creation magic, mind you. For creation magic, if it so wished, could reshape an object or being beyond recognition — essence and all.

Risks of Magic

"*Look everyone! I'm flying!*"
—Last words of the almost Ban Ard graduate, Toussaintoi mage Perignon, during one of his final exams. Never to be seen again

Magic, contrary to what most people believe, carries real risks — it's not something you can just "cast" without consequences. Most of these dangers, setting aside failed, miscast, or reflected spells (and a long etcetera), stem from the element or para-element drawn upon to execute the spell. As previously mentioned, the use of vital energy to fuel magic to the point of death is one such case.

Even the simplest forms of magic — such as mind magic — can negatively affect the user if not approached with proper restraint.

Beyond the physical exhaustion caused by mental magic, the potentially lethal use of vital energy to cast spells, or the well-documented spirit possessions and hauntings linked to goetia and necromancy, there exists a wide array of side effects — usually caused by overdrawing or overexertion during casting — that any spellcaster must consider if they wish to avoid unfortunate ends.

To avoid them, one might follow a maxim present in human cultures since time

immemorial: "*Of three paths, the correct one is always the middle.*"

Some notable examples of dangerous magical side effects include:

- **Water**: Overexertion while casting water-based spells can cause intense cold, and a thin layer of ice may form around the caster's body. Excessive extraction may also trigger vivid hallucinations.
- **Air**: A sudden burst of wind may explode outward from the caster, throwing them backwards up to two meters. There are recorded cases of mages who miscast Levitation so badly that they began to rise uncontrollably — never to be seen again. Overdrawing from Air may also knock the caster off their feet or cause them to cast the wrong spell altogether.
- **Earth**: Drawing too much power or overexerting while casting an Earth spell may result in immobilization, as the ground trembles around the caster. Attempting to pass through solid matter may cause the mage to fuse with the object instead.
- **Fire**: Overexertion when casting fire spells is especially dangerous — the most unfortunate casters might self-immolate unintentionally. Sources are particularly vulnerable, as Fire tends to trigger their innate magical abilities in violent and unpredictable ways.

And these are only the risks tied to the four base elements.

Extraction and overuse involving Ether or para-elements can be even more dangerous. Ether, being the quintessence of all things, may cause the experience of magical energy sparking out of their body and causing damage both internal and around, along with identity loss in mild cases or instant death in the worst. Para-elements, being mostly hybrid combinations of two or more base elements, often combine the side effects of each and amplify them with additional, unique effects of their own.

Limits of Magic

As with everything else in this world, magic has its limits — some of which we've already touched on, like the difficulty of casting spells using an element different from the one required. That whole "magic can do anything and justify everything" idea is, frankly, nonsense. If magic truly had no limits, no matter how many well-meaning mages were out there, the world would have been reduced to ash long ago.

A pair of dimeritium shackles

These limits, however, are diverse and depend on several factors — usually one's natural talent, the amount of power extracted (as previously discussed), and one's training and experience. Though never —with certain exceptions— to the nonsensical levels suggested by some folklore.

Two notable examples are:

- Witchers, who —due to the biological limitations caused by their mutations— are unable to cast complex spells (with the rare exception of those born as Sources, of course).
- Portal magic, while undoubtedly useful, is limited when it comes to range. The farther one wishes to open a portal, the more unstable it becomes, as it requires crossing a greater span of the Ethereal Plane. The only way this has been overcome is through the use of various portal devices and mechanisms. Even then, they are prone to failure if the route passes through areas of interference — such as the infamous section of the Great Sea known as the Mad Sea, which prevents long-distance teleportation between the Old Continent and the Western Continent.

And indeed, even nature itself imposes limits on magic. The most well-known case is dimeritium, a metal which —depending on the amount applied— can either regulate or outright suppress magical abilities.

For instance, dimeritium earrings are often used to help regulate the powers of Sources, preventing outbursts, trances, or uncontrolled episodes — especially during their training in magical institutions. On the other hand, dimeritium shackles are designed to completely suppress a mage's ability to cast spells, rendering even the most talented of them effectively powerless.

On the So-Called "Schools of Magic"

"*"Being only a pyromancer doesn't pay taxes, dear. All it'll likely get you is a one-way trip to a stake. And I assure you, there's no future left to glimpse from there*"
—Klara Larissa de Winter, fire magic specialist and founder of the Aretuza Academy, to one of her first students (843)

So-called schools of magic do not actually exist. They are an invention born from the misconceptions of common folk and their encounters — more often than not — with charlatans, tricksters, or outright frauds. What does exist are the institutions where actual mages are trained.

As previously explained in the section on branches of magic, it is elemental specialization that defines a mage's abilities — allowing them to cast a wide range of spells aligned with their chosen element, and even spells from others, should they be ambitious (and competent) enough.

If the popular notion of "schools" were real, and a mage chose to specialize solely in, say, pyromancy, they would hardly enjoy the elevated social standing mages hold in many societies — for they would be little more than someone who can divine by fire and not much else. In such a case, their supposed years of "education" would amount to nothing more than an extravagant waste of time.

Theories on Magic

"*If there really were a divine plane of goodness out there, I'd expect its inhabitants to show up more often than during mushroom-induced hallucinations or near-death experiences. Until then, it's just fancy theology*"
—Supposed last words of Axel Esparza to Triss Merigold during the Battle of Sodden Hill (1263)
"*Personally, I've seen so much as a medic that I don't believe in the existence of a plane of peace and tranquility for spirits. Not because the gods wouldn't want it — I'm sure Telawel could forge one if he wished. But if we were truly made in their image, then they must be just as chaotic and flawed as we are. And so, perhaps they chose to skip its creation entirely and — may Father Wieland forgive me for the blasphemy — simply return our souls, upon death, to the vastness of their divine essence.*"
—Attributed to Racirz of Hengfors, spoken to a then-young medic in Milo Vanderbeck's field staff — Shani — during the aftermath of the Battle of Brenna (April 1268)

Given the existence of the Chasm, some mages have proposed that, logically, there must exist a natural opposite: a place inhabited by resting spirits along what theology might label as "angels."

However, since the manifestation of calm or peaceful spirits in the material world is extremely rare — to the point that no meaningful dialogue has ever been recorded — such a plane has never been corroborated, not even indirectly through dialogue with these spirits. This stands in stark contrast to Chasm Magic, which has a known and tangible presence in the world — a notable example being the Nemeta.

This leaves the theory as nothing more than that — a theory — clung to by priests desperate not to lose faith in their divine figures. They insist that something "greater" must exist, and that magic has both a "good" and an "evil" side. Yet even demon folklore, when scrutinized, fails to support this duality. Take, for instance, a certain mirror-merchant — not inherently evil, but simply a dealer in contracts that individuals were free to accept or reject.

The only sliver of potential evidence supporting the existence of such an opposite plane comes from the so-called Watchers, also referred to as Grigori by certain mages and scholars — a mysterious, nameless race reportedly seen since the time of the elves' arrival. Believed to be distantly related to godlings, Watchers are characterized by their mastery over the Fifth Element, and are considered a subgroup of the enigmatic Refaim.

Many scholars and mages theorize that countless "mystical experiences" may, in fact, be attributed to encounters with these Watchers. However, it is likely that their occasional appearances — far from being divine — were simply misinterpreted by the common folk, giving rise to the mythological image of "angels," and perhaps even to certain gods and goddesses, due to their overwhelming command of Ethereal magic.

Should they exist, their origin is most likely not a "divine" plane opposing the Chasm, but rather the Astral Plane — making it the strongest candidate for the "opposite" of the Abyss that some mages continue to seek.

Regarding Certain Entities Supposedly "Beyond Our Comprehension"

"*If something has tentacles, whispers in your dreams, and drives you mad, it's probably not a god — most likely a succubus or incubus messing with you… or just another bastard from a plane we haven't studied well enough yet.*"
—Opinion attributed to Putnam Pitch, witcher of the School of the Griffin, during his attendance as a guest at the open-month lectures hosted by various masters of magic in the Department of Supernatural Phenomena, Oxenfurt Academy (June, 1372)

On the other hand, the so-called "Cosmic Horrors" — as dubbed by certain scholars devoted to… let's say questionable texts, such as the Liber Ivonis — are most likely not "gods," but rather entities from distant planes that, to our current magical science, appear incomprehensible and immensely powerful. In truth,

however, they merely exploit the gaps in our understanding — much like a demon summoned through Goetia takes advantage of the summoner's ignorance.

After all, if one stops to think critically, when the first mages summoned beings like djinns into the material world without the slightest clue how to contain them or tap into their power, the resulting devastation likely led many to see them as "unknowable beings of overwhelming might from planes beyond comprehension." And yet, over time — despite everything — they became understandable, containable, and even usable… at least by experienced mages with the proper precautions.

On the "give to receive" theory of magic

"*If 'give to receive' were how magic actually worked, that dumbass Erland and his merry band would've dropped dead the moment they started casting Signs.*"
—Arnaghad, member of the Order of Witchers and founder of the School of the Bear

While this concept is somewhat corroborated through contractual magic (see the previously mentioned use of djinns and other elementals), it is not what some mages-turned-religious zealots claim it to be. Chaos does not take to give, because Chaos is omnipresent in our world — and its power is so vast, and our understanding and usage of it so limited, that if what certain pseudo-theologians propose were true (namely, that Chaos possesses some kind of sentience and therefore requires a sacrifice to grant something, lest it be "offended"), it would have long since wiped out every single magic user on the world.

Thus, such a system would only make sense in a world where ley lines — and therefore, access to magic — are scarce. Which is not the case here. Or, in an extreme situation, between two mages who, due to exceptional circumstances, have no external sources of magic to draw from and are forced to use their own life energy to cast spells. But considering that even the most desolate corners of our world still possess ley lines to tap into, this "give to receive" system is not the natural order of things as some preach — but rather, a spectacular display of ignorance wrapped in delusion.

Spell Complexity Hierarchy and Magic-Using

Professions

Contrary to what some populations may believe, not all professions use magic. For obvious reasons—such as the difficulty of mastering it, the fact that not everyone is capable of doing so, and the reality that, if everyone could wield magic, the world would have long ago descended into total anarchy.

1. **Blessings & curses:** Anyone with enough will.
2. **Rune & glyph magic:** Artificers, runewrights; paladins and very rarely bards (all of them through objects—paladins typically through their armor and weapons).
3. **Enhanced abilities:** Anomalies only. But they are extremely rare.
4. **Signs:** Witchers (though other magical users—and even non-magical individuals—could, in theory, use them as well).
5. **Basic Elemental Spells:** Elementalists, monks (particularly in the Far East).
6. **Manifestations:** Mostly used by demonologists and priests—though in truth, anyone could use them. Witchers, for instance, use manifestations misnamed as "rituals" when lifting curses from time to time.
7. **Callings:** Pellars, druids.
8. **Invocations:** Priests, pellars, druids, and similar equivalents around the world.
9. **Convocations:** Witches, warlocks, and their equivalents across the world.
10. **Entreaties:** Clerics, paladins, and their equivalents around the world.
11. **Spells:** Mages and their equivalents in other regions of the world.
12. **Miracles:** Theoretically, anyone. But they are usually performed by priests or their equivalents.
13. **Rituals:** Mages and their equivalents in other regions of the world.
14. **Polymorphism:** Only extremely talented mages or their equivalents.
15. **Creational magic:** Only extremely talented mages or their equivalents.
16. **Unicorn & Space-Time Magic:** Unicorns, Vran Operators, Navigators (to a certain degree), Elder Blood carriers.
17. **Watcher magic:** As the name implies, only Watchers.

List of Professions Capable of Using Antimagic (Ranked from Most Common to Rarest)

As is evident, there are a number of professions which—though lesser-known compared to those that employ magic—are recognized for using antimagic methods in their line of work. The following list ranks them from most to least common.

1. **Witch hunters, vampire hunters** (technically, vampire hunters are dhampir hunters, since no regular human could defeat a vampire), **criminals, etc.**: Users of dimeritium swords, shackles, chains, and similar tools.
2. **Alchemists**: Some alchemical concoctions can disrupt magic temporarily.
3. **Bounty hunters**: If they're anomalies born with resistance to magic (such as some girls born under the Curse of the Black Sun like Renfri or Maxii van Dekkar), they rely on their innate ability. Otherwise, they resort to the same methods used by the aforementioned professions.
4. **Crusaders**: Self-righteous knight-errants who despise all things magical and "impure." The key difference with paladins is their lack of magic, their status as non-"missionary-heroes," and the fact that they follow a personal or secular code rather than one tied to any religion. They may use a combination of the previous professions' methods alongside specialized non-dimeritium inventions. A notable example is Eryck of Denesle. Their gear varies depending on the "crusade" they're currently pursuing.
5. **Mutagenists**: Mad anti-magic scientists obsessed with creating the perfect being capable of exterminating other races, "aberrations of nature" (such as witchers), monsters, and eventually magic itself—so that humanity or their race may reign supreme. However, they are exceedingly rare, as most mages are also scientists.

A bounty hunter with a dimeritium sword

Notable Magic Users

Water-based

- Aurora Henson

Air-based

- Drithelm of Pont Vanis

Earth-based

- Tadrus Hen Lohsa

Fire-based

- Klara Larissa de Winter

Chasm-based

- Brianna Vassermiller
- Cadfan of Ebbing
- Eternal Eclipse

Ether-based

- Artorius Vigo
- Watchers

Star-based

- Refaim (most of them, likely)

Para-Elemental-based

- Alexander

Multiple Elements

- Alzur
- Cosimo Malaspina
- Idarran of Ulivo
- Witchers

Submagics Specialists

- Higher Vampires (in some cases only, blood magic)
- Runewrights and artificiers (rune magic)
- Philippa Eilhart (polymorphy)

Trivia

- Given that The Witcher's core has always been the subversion of the dominant fantasy of its time — particularly the polished, high fantasy of the 1990s, like The Lord of the Rings or Disney fairy tales (notably parodied in several early short stories) — this article, while presenting and expanding on everything canonically established about how magic works, also contains a number of jabs (some subtle, others not so much) at the dominant fantasy trends of the 2020s. Most notably, it takes aim at Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition (and its many glaring lore inconsistencies and nonsensical mechanics), a system that rose to massive popularity thanks to the success of D&D streamed content like *Vox Machina* and *The Mighty Nein*. A subtle swipe is also directed at the rise of "cosmic horror" tropes, fueled by the influence of video games such as *Elden Ring* and *Elden Ring: Nightrein*.
- The subsection **On the "give to receive" theory of magic** is, in a veiled manner, a critique of the increasingly inconsistent magical system introduced in Netflix's The Witcher adaptation as the seasons progressed, starting in its first season. This system bears no resemblance to the straightforward yet effective elemental-based magical system established in the books, video games, or even the tabletop RPG.
- The inclusion of miracles in the article as part of the expanded magical system in The Witcher is inspired by the miracles in the Souls series, though with the divine element removed. Mechanically (should anyone from R. Talsorian, CD Projekt, or a random homebrew enthusiast for The Witcher TTRPG happen to read this), miracles would serve as a way to grant priests access to powerful spells without turning them into full-fledged mages.
- As for Invocations, since they originally lacked defined lore, they were given the simple role of being an intermediate point between a Witcher Sign and a mage's spell. This also serves as a lore-friendly justification for why druids (who also use Invocations) are less powerful than mages and not their equals.

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